



The Columbia City Council conducted a Regular Meeting and a Public Hearing on Wednesday, December 17, 2008 at City Hall, 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina. The Honorable Mayor Robert D. Coble called the meeting to order at 9:11 a.m. The following members of Council were present: The Honorable E.W. Cromartie, II, The Honorable Sam Davis, The Honorable Tameika Isaac Devine, The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann, The Honorable Kirkman Finlay III and The Honorable Belinda F. Gergel. Also present were Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Salley, City Clerk.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Minutes of August 20, 2008 – Regular Meeting – *Approved as presented.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to approve the Minutes of the Regular Meeting conducted on August 20, 2008 as presented.

PRESENTATIONS

2. Introduction of the December 2008 Employee of the Month (*Ms. Dina Mauldin – Water Works Chemist, Utilities & Engineering Department*) – Mr. John J. Dooley, Jr. P.E., Director of Utilities & Engineering

Mr. John J. Dooley, Jr. P.E., Director of Utilities & Engineering introduced Ms. Dina Mauldin, Water Works Chemist for the Utilities and Engineering Department as the December 2008 Employee of the Month. He described Ms. Mauldin as a very special lady with 11 years of service with the City of Columbia. She is very active in her community and church. Ms. Mauldin is a dedicated professional and she serves on many committees. She is a real asset to our staff and I am proud to introduce her to you.

Mayor Coble and Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager presented Ms. Dina Mauldin with a plaque and tokens of appreciation for being selected as the December 2008 Employee of the Month.

3. City of Columbia King Day Celebration and Commemoration – Mr. Durham Carter, Chairman of the Martin Luther King Memorial Foundation and Mr. Chip Land, Long-Range Planner

Mr. Durham Carter, Chairman of the Martin Luther King Memorial Foundation provided an overview of the planning process for a celebration honoring the late Dr. Martin Luther King. Since 1986 the Congress of the United States designed the celebration of King Day honoring the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The City of Columbia adopted a committee to go forward each year to plan for this celebration. This is the first time the committee has elected to change the date from Monday, January 19, 2009 to the following Monday, January 26, 2009 to avoid conflicts with the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States. There is a small window of time in which people need to plan to be a part of this historical event and we want to

show support for those who are able and willing to travel to Washington, DC. The King Day Celebration in Columbia, sponsored by the City of Columbia will remain at 4:00 p.m. at the King Park Community Center. This year's theme will be "Why We Can't Wait Any Longer", which is a message from Dr. King used to reinforce a sense of urgency during really tough times. The speaker will be Dr. Percy Mack, Superintendent of Richland School District One and Councilwoman Belinda Gergel graciously volunteered to introduce the speaker for this occasion; we say thank you. This year we sponsored a food drive; we raised food to donate to Harvest Hope. We have over (forty) 40 parks and organizations that are collecting food. This is one way in which Dr. King fed the hungry. As we move forward in climbing the mountain we will remember that Dr. King was all about helping others. We would appreciate your further support in the honorary naming of a section of Columbia in support of Dr. King. He noted that Councilman Cromartie met with and helped the committee with the planning of this proposal.

Councilor Cromartie said that the Martin Luther King Dream Keeper Award has been a great success over the years. He asked where the large marker would go.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner reported that the committee has been working on the idea of an honorary renaming of a portion of Harden Street and Farrow Road. We are still working on the wording for the signs. This includes a large marker with a photo of Dr. King and street signs. He said that the signs would only go in key intersections and directional signs would be installed at Greene Street and Harden Street directing you to King Park and the Stone of Hope Memorial. He distributed the mock-ups that have been done, which are similar to historic markers already around the City. One (1) marker would be installed at Farrow Road near I-20; the street signs will be black and gold with the full name "Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr."

Councilor Rickenmann asked if directional signs were done under the way finder program.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner said no sir it was not, but this will allow us to install one sign in each direction at the corner of Greene Street and Harden Street.

Councilor Cromartie asked if the large marker would be placed downtown.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner said no sir, it will be at Farrow Road and I-20 so that it has the most visibility.

Councilor Cromartie requested that a large marker be placed downtown also.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner said that the other idea is to place one at Colonial Drive/Farrow Road at Harden Street, which is a little closer to downtown.

Councilor Cromartie said that we may need more than one marker of that kind.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner informed the Council that some of the signs will be done by the Sign Shop, but the larger signs will not; this can get expensive. We are asking for authorization to continue to work with the committee and for the City Manager or his designee to make a formal application to SCDOT, because these are state streets and an encroachment is required. We will come back to you with specific costs. My understanding is that a funding source has not been identified.

Councilor Rickenmann asked if Mr. Land could foresee any kind of hiccups with SCDOT.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner said that this is not a normal request for SCDOT, but they do approve a lot of bridges, intersections and sections of highways. Usually the color and size are a little different. I had some preliminary conversations with them over a year ago and it has shifted so much that I am not sure.

Councilor Cromartie said that he doesn't anticipate any problems.

Councilor Rickenmann suggested that we write a letter now asking them to please do this on behalf of the citizens of Columbia.

Councilor Cromartie said that would be a part of the motion along with asking Mr. John Hardee to assist us in the process.

Councilor Gergel said that she is excited about this initiative, because it is important that we look at great historic figures and help our children learn about them. I do want to clarify that the names Farrow Road and Harden Street will remain; therefore, no addresses will have to be changed. This is an honorary name that we are putting on these streets.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner concurred.

Councilor Devine commended Mr. Cromartie for moving this initiative forward. This is a significant part of the City and it is a fairly long part. She suggested that we add a sign near the park within the Five Points area; one (1) is needed around the colleges; one (1) at the intersection of Harden Street and Colonial Drive; and one (1) on Farrow Road. I would suggest that you incorporate a number of signs into the budget and not just the one (1) big historical marker. She asked them to bring back a budget for a number of signs. It's fine if we need to phase in the signs over a couple of years, but at least we will know what the cost will be to have four (4) large signs.

Councilor Davis concurred with Ms. Devine. He requested that the committee add a representative from the Farrow Road corridor to provide input on a strategic location.

Councilor Cromartie said that it is also important that there be a marker at Gervais Street and Harden Street for visitors; it is important to have one (1) by Allen University and Benedict College for historic purposes; and it must be diverse so that it will go through all aspects of the community. The committee did a lot of research and I want to thank them for their work; it took a lot of time to get us where we are. There is also a street in Hopkins named Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard.

Councilor Finlay said that if the money is not budgeted this can be an easy community fundraiser; it will demonstrate our commitment even more if we did that. I am willing to contribute and we should ask the community to contribute. Then all of a sudden instead of us spending the money it becomes a community effort. This could cost \$15,000.

Mr. Chip Land, Long Range Planner said that it depends on the size; the larger historic signs can be as much as \$3,000 each. I estimate at least \$15,000 to \$20,000.

Councilor Finlay asked the City Manager if there is a staff person that can organize this; we can ask each Council member to write letters to specific constituents and ask them for support.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager agreed to designate someone.

Councilor Finlay added that it would be two (2) fold; it will take some budget pressure off of us and we can make this a community effort that we can all stand up and be proud of.

Councilor Devine suggested that the Historic Columbia Foundation may want to partner with us. I would rather that than to ask the community to pay for the signs.

Councilor Cromartie said that we don't go to the community for right of way signs for anything else. Instead, we should get this done. We fund raise for scholarships. The biggest thing here is that this is not controversial and I recommend that we move forward.

Councilor Davis said that the monument is a destination point; it is the only one of its kind in the state; people want to see it; and I see SCDOT playing a major role in working to install the signs on the interstate and within the right of way.

Councilor Rickenmann asked that the Council not limit the signs to four (4). We need to determine what is appropriate for the distance; there should be a minimum of four (4) signs.

Councilor Devine said that in response to Mr. Finlay's comments, we already do a huge push to the community for scholarships and donations to Harvest Hope to make sure that all communities are a part of this.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager asked Mr. Baker to continue working with the committee toward addressing the issues that were raised as it relates to the number of signs as well as soliciting private donations.

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to authorize the rescheduling of the 2009 City of Columbia King Day Celebration from Monday, January 19, 2008 to Monday, January 26, 2008 to avoid conflicts with the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States and to endorse the commemoration of a portion of Harden Street and Farrow Road in honor of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to include the installation of at least four (4) signs. Staff was further directed to develop a budget for consideration by the Council. The City Manager was authorized to seek approval from SCDOT for an encroachment permit to install the commemoration signage. The Committee is asked to develop a fundraising plan for the MLK Dream Keeper Award scholarships.

Councilor Finlay stated to the City Manager that once you work out a plan on private contributions please put me down for \$250.

4. Hospitality Tax Funding Recommendations – Mr. Jim Hardy, Chair of the Hospitality Tax Committee

Mr. Jim Hardy, Chair of the Hospitality Tax Committee applauded and thanked his fellow committee members for working three (3) full days to consider the Hospitality Tax funding applications. This year we've had more than eighty five (85) applications to review between the Accommodations Tax Fund and the Hospitality Tax Fund. I am here today, because Black Expo was not included in our annual recommendations. We had questions concerning their application and we asked Mr. Darrin Thomas to report back to us with the answers. After satisfactorily doing so, the committee is recommending that Black Expo be funded \$50,000 for this fiscal year and I am seeking approval of that recommendation.

Councilor Finlay asked if the funding is available in the Hospitality Tax Fund.

Mr. Jim Hardy, Chair of the Hospitality Tax Committee replied yes, there is funding available.

Upon motion by Mr. Rickenmann, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to approve funding for the Black Expo in the amount of \$50,000 from the Hospitality Tax Fund for fiscal year 2008/2009.

Councilor Finlay asked that we reiterate to everybody that we are expecting a very, very tough financial year next year. Make your plans now for next year because revenues and the local options sales tax are falling. Everybody needs to be aware that the pots may be smaller next year. I want the public to understand that they have six (6) months to prepare. Ms. Gober, it would be a wonderful idea if we could get a letter out to organizations asking them to be prepared. If the money is there then we are all happy, but if it isn't then we have given people as much time as possible to think about how to deal with that situation.

Councilor Devine said that a letter is not necessary; they know that the money is contingent from year to year and even if there is money next year that doesn't mean that they will get the same allocation as this year.

Ms. Libby Gober, City Council Liaison said that there is a caveat in the award letter stating that funding is contingent upon revenues.

Councilor Gergel requested an update on Hospitality Tax revenues through October.

Mayor Coble said that he received a letter from Ric Luber of the Conventions and Visitors Bureau (CVB) about receiving surplus funds from the Accommodations Tax Fund.

Ms. Libby Gober, City Council Liaison agreed that Mr. Luber wanted to be considered for surplus funds from the Accommodations Tax Fund.

Mayor Coble said that they are doing the "Famously Hot" marketing campaign and it seems to be catching on. During the midst of advertising he needs to decide whether to continue that and we need to determine the status of that sooner rather than later.

Councilor Devine explained that last year the CVB came to us, because they had a shortfall and we allocated money from the surplus to help with that shortfall. For 2008/2009, it was suggested that we give the accommodations tax money to the CVB and Lake Murray Tourism due to the laws and then we moved everyone who was being funded from accommodations to hospitality. Technically, they were given a decrease from what they received in the past from both pots. Hopefully this will streamline things. We told him that if the CVB does a good job then the pot will increase and we did say that if there was a surplus then we would expend that to them.

Ms. Libby Gober, City Council Liaison said that she will bring the figures back to Council.

Mayor Coble said that we don't need to know what the surplus is; we need to tell him that they will have a surplus.

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Mr. Finlay, Council voted unanimously to designate any surplus from the Accommodations Tax Fund to the Conventions and Visitors Bureau.

Councilor Devine asked that staff determine if the Council promised surplus funding to Lake Murray since they received a cut as well. I would be reluctant to say that all of the surplus money will go to the CVB.

Councilor Davis asked that Council continue to consider Lake Murray as well; the fishing tournament was highly attended; and we can't leave them out in the cold.

Mayor Coble suggested that the Council schedule a discussion on Accommodations Tax surplus funds in January 2009.

- **Council recessed at 9:58 a.m.**
- **Council reconvened at 10:04 a.m.**

PUBLIC HEARING

5. Ordinance 2008-050 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 12, Motor Vehicles and Traffic, Article II, Stopping, Standing and Parking, Division 3, Residential Permit Parking Districts

Mr. John Spade, Director of Parking Services said that this was advertised as a Public Hearing, because it is required when there are fee increases that the Council is considering. There are several fee increases, primarily for tenant and visitor passes. The main thrust of the amendment is to reduce the number of tenant passes available. We are seeing a broad spread abuse of tenant passes. For example, a duplex with two (2) living units can have six (6) people living in those units and each of those six (6) tenants have a tenant pass and a visitor's pass for a total of twelve (12) passes for one (1) duplex. Under the amendments, they will be limited to two (2) passes and they can only get two (2) if there is no off-street parking available. I will note that I have worked with various members of the University Hill Neighborhood and they are fully in support of these amendments.

Councilor Cromartie added that over the years we did this in Arsenal Hill and at Benedict College. He asked what provisions would be made for someone having a holiday party with a lot of guests.

Mr. John Spade, Director of Parking Services said that the tenant could contact Parking Services and we will back off of enforcement.

Councilor Gergel added that the University Hills Neighborhood Association has struggled with this matter for many years.

Mr. Marc Manos, President of the University Hills Neighborhood Association appeared before the members of Council in support of the ordinance. He said that the proposed ordinance solves what had become a secondary market in parking permits. I live on the corner of Senate and Henderson and there are two (2) apartment buildings with paved parking in the rear; fourteen (14) spaces for one (1) building and twelve (12) for the other. Basically these are nice young folks that give their permits to their boyfriends, girlfriends and other folks at the University and they all park on my block to go to class. This amendment will solve that problem, which is our primary concern in terms of parking.

- **Council opened the Public Hearing at 10:12 a.m.**

No one appeared in favor of or in opposition to the Ordinance.

- **Council closed the Public Hearing at 10:12 a.m.**

Upon motion by Dr. Gergel, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to give first reading approval to Ordinance 2008-050 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 12, Motor Vehicles and Traffic, Article II, Stopping, Standing and Parking, Division 3, Residential Permit Parking Districts.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION / ACTION

6. 2009 Audit Committee / Budget Committee / Work Session Schedule

Mayor Coble asked if the dates included in their packets seemed to be agreeable.

Councilor Rickenmann suggested that they conduct a Budget Committee meeting in January or February 2009. The schedule has the first Budget Committee meeting scheduled for April 2009 and we will be deep into the budget process by then.

Councilor Finlay suggested that they alternate the Audit Committee and Budget Committee meetings and schedule the first Budget Committee meeting for February 2009.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager explained that the intent was to schedule those days as full day work opportunities for the Council and that would leave the flexibility to set the schedule as deemed appropriate.

Councilor Finlay suggested that we look at scheduling another Budget Committee meeting between April 1, 2009 and June 30, 2009.

Upon motion by Ms. Devine, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to reserve the second Wednesday of each month to conduct Audit Committee, Budget Committee and/or Work Sessions as deemed necessary and appropriate.

7. Board of Zoning Appeals Appointment

Councilor Davis asked that this appointment be deferred.

8. Columbia Tree & Appearance Commission Appointments

Councilor Gergel asked that these appointments be deferred until Mr. Howard Duvall, Chair of the Columbia Tree and Appearance Commission is scheduled to meet with Council.

9. Design Development Review Commission Appointments

Councilor Cromartie asked that Ms. Doris Hilderbrand be considered for an appointment. He said that Historic Waverly has done a tremendous amount of work on historic preservation along with the Historic Columbia Foundation. They were one of the first neighborhoods to be designated as a historic neighborhood. Under the leadership of Ms. Susan Freeman and Ms. Hilderbrand they have been recording the history of Waverly with recordings from famous people and others that have been a part of the inspiration. Ms. Hilderbrand has done a tremendous job and members of the community support her nomination to the DDRC.

Councilor Devine explained that there are three (3) vacancies and out of those one (1) has to be an architect; one (1) has to be a real estate developer; and the other has to be a community person.

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Dr. Gergel, Council voted six (6) to one (1) to approve the appointment of Ms. Doris Hilderbrand to the Design Development Review Commission for a three (3) year term. Voting aye were Mr. Cromartie, Mr. Davis, Ms. Devine, Mr. Finlay, Dr. Gergel and Mayor Coble. Mr. Rickenmann voted nay.

Upon motion by Mr. Finlay, seconded by Dr. Gergel, Council voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Ms. Beronica Whisnat to the Design Development Review Commission for a three (3) year term.

Councilor Gergel stated that all of the architect slots come from Council District III and we have had some wonderful people to apply.

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Dr. Gergel, Council voted unanimously to approve the appointment of Mr. Dale Marshall to the Design Development Review Commission for a three (3) year term. *It is noted for the record that both Councilor Cromartie and Councilor Gergel agree to the appointment of Mr. Dale Marshall as a representative of Council Districts II and III.*

Councilor Devine reminded the Council of the need to schedule a meeting with all members of the DDRC. She said that a lot of focus is placed on the DDRC, BOZA and the Planning Commission, but we have a lot of other boards and commissions and it looks like some of them have a significant amount of vacancies.

Councilor Finlay requested a monthly vacancy report for all boards and commissions at the beginning of each month. He said that the Columbia Action Council, the Commercial Loan Review Board and the Property Maintenance Board of Appeals appear to represent 24 of the remaining 36 vacancies. We need to deal with nonfunctioning boards.

Councilor Gergel asked that the City Clerk post the application for boards and commissions on the website along with descriptions and duties, because people need to understand what's expected of them. Be sure to promote the vacancies through all possible venues to include the business community and other organizations.

Councilor Cromartie said that a lot of his constituents may not have access to the website. We have great folks that would like to serve. If I can get the information in writing I will then send it out to people to apply.

Mr. Marc Mylott, Director of Planning and Development Services said that when we were trying last month to get the Board of Zoning Appeals scheduled for a meeting with Council I had several members ask why is it that City Council wants to meet with us. Could you give me a purpose statement that I could provide the various boards and commissions as to the purpose of that meeting?

Councilor Finlay explained that his purpose is very simple. As I understand it, the Board of Zoning Appeals has a very specific purpose and their job is to interpret law and not to create it. Is that a fair assessment?

Mr. Marc Mylott, Director of Planning and Development Services said yes sir.

Councilor Finlay said that what he consistently hears and gets worn out with is that it appears at points that the Board of Zoning Appeals goes into areas that are not its purview; makes comments that City residents deem at best inappropriate and offensive; and seem to make value judgments that people really don't understand. I think we are going to get into trouble if we continue to have that issue. The second issue that I've heard consistently is that it doesn't seem

to be equal to all; there seems to be at points certain interpretations for certain groups and different interpretations for different groups, which is going to get us in even more trouble.

Councilor Devine said that they need to hear from the Council that appoints them; they need to hear our philosophy regarding their service on these different boards and commissions. They should always respect people that appear in front of them; they are public servants. They need to hear the concerns that we have as a Council and I won't leave it up to staff to relay that information. We are not singling them out, because we have met with our judges and we routinely meet with people who interact with the citizens a lot. We expect for them to be very serious in that role at all times.

Councilor Cromartie said that he had the pleasure of serving on the Zoning Board for almost ten (10) years and he always remembered being told to be respectful to the people that are there; we want you to be brave and have the independence needed to make your decisions. There is a reason why the General Assembly has it so that judicial appeals from the Zoning Board go to the Circuit Court. The reason why the Zoning Board was put into place was to give them a judicial quasi administrative independence and to be in a position to make those decisions. It has always been a concern that the rationale for the decision is not always articulated or written in such a manner that the Circuit Court Judge could understand what they based the decision upon. In my twenty five (25) yeas of service never has the Council collectively met with members of the Zoning Board.

Councilor Davis agreed that the Council should meet with the boards for the same reasons that have already been stated. We are getting too many questions about the deliberations, the process used and interpretations. This board has no more independence than any other board or commission we appoint. They do have a responsibility to understand the laws and the ordinances that they are required to pass judgment on; they must have a reasonable degree of sensitivity regarding the issues brought before them as well as the areas of this City and the people that their decisions are going to impact. If they have some real questions or differences of opinion about the ordinances that they are required to pass judgment on and implement then we need to know that. I am getting feedback that people are going off in unintended directions. We do need to sit and talk to them and if they have issues with the ordinances they swore to uphold then they need to decide if they want to continue to serve or bring those issues to our attention and let us consider our position in terms of tweaking what we can or seeking legislative advice. To them out there and continue to get the kinds of complaints that I am getting is wrong. There is something wrong with the process or interpretation and we need to fix that.

Councilor Rickenmann asked if it would be beneficial to have the attorney that advises the boards and a subcommittee of this group meet with the boards.

Councilor Cromartie agreed that Mr. Rickenmann's recommendation would be more appropriate.

Councilor Devine said that we are not talking about specific decisions. It is our purview and our right to express to them our concerns about the complaints we are receiving. I am saying that all of our boards and commissions and anyone who interacts with the public needs to be respectful to anyone who appears before them. We must relay this to boards and commissions, especially when we have new people coming on.

Mr. Marc Mylott, Director of Planning and Development Services said that he is hearing a common theme over the way in which applicants and the public interact with boards and commissions as well as what are the purposes of the various boards and commissions. Instead

of running the risk of singling out one board over the others, why don't we schedule this meeting with all three (3) land use boards and commissions at the same time?

Councilor Cromartie said that he would agree to that.

Councilor Gergel said that as she understands it, we appointed members to the Board of Zoning Appeals in October and she has heard that members of the board are concerned that sometimes we have not been on top of the appointments to fill vacancies. That is a matter that they may want to share with us.

Councilor Finlay said that he will be happy to meet with all groups, but I hear that comments are being made in public about how board members feel about future projects and once that comment is made before a project appears you have to re-teach yourself, because you haven't heard the merits of the case. There have been issues of people approaching land owners after their case is denied; it appears to be self healing. If a discussion doesn't fit within the criteria, then we shouldn't be having it. Those are my points; one of which I think refers to a specific decision; all of which I think refers to the conduct and decorum of the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Councilor Davis reiterated that his position is to meet with the members of the boards and commissions that they appoint. I do recall that we have met with members of the Zoning Board since I came on Council.

Councilor Rickenmann stated that it was the Planning Commission.

Councilor Davis said that it was not for the purpose of influencing decisions and not to be specific about cases, but I think that has to happen, because there are too many complaints. It's not singling them out, but it is the intention to put them on a stage where we can sit and have some dialog. I think we would be less than genuine by not expressing the fact that we do have some concerns that these boards and commissions do their job within the letter of the law, but still understand the impact of the decisions they make; the same as we have to do up here. There are times when certain things need to be tweaked and we need feedback from time to time. He explained that when he served on the County's Zoning Board, prior to every meeting they would drive to the area and through the neighborhood to get an idea what the impact might be; then you can make an intelligent decision, because you understand why the case is before you.

REPORTS AND UPDATES

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager respectfully requested that the Council defer the remaining reports until they complete the items on the agenda and that they move forward with the Consent Agenda and the items that immediately follow the Consent Agenda.

Councilor Devine asked that **Item 25**. not be approved until the report is given on the Employee Wellness Campaign.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager agreed.

10. City Manager's Report – Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager – *Please refer to Item A.*

11. Staff Reports

- Comprehensive Plan – Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department - *Please refer to Item B1.*
- Redevelopment Plan – Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development – *Please refer to Item B2.*
- Employee Wellness Campaign – Mr. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager of Bureau of Neighborhood and Community Services and Ms. Ray Borders Gray, Wellness Campaign Coordinator – *Please refer to Item B3.*
- Economic Development Activities– Mr. Jim Gambrell, Executive Director of Economic Development – *This staff report was deferred.*

CONSENT AGENDA

Councilor Finlay asked that **Item 25.** be held for discussion.

Councilor Devine inquired about **Item 20.**, which is to approve the consultant contract for a Parking Study in Five Points. I have received several calls on this one; I am supporting this, because clearly there is a need for parking in Five Points and it is best to update the study. People have different opinions on this. She asked that the committee keep us all in the loop on what's happening and that once we receive the update from the consultant that we have an opportunity to discuss it prior to doing anything else.

Councilor Finlay said that he is going to support this and that he is looking forward to the numbers. I have great concerns that we won't be able to spend money going into the future on structured parking in Five Points. I am willing to spend this money to help understand the issue, but if there is not a compelling financial argument please don't look to me for support to take money out of the Parking Fund. I would like a very clear understanding from the consultant that if they get into this and there isn't a need for parking then the answer can't be that there is a need for parking; it has to be a full blown study with no conclusions drawn. I am willing to move forward on this with a little bit of hope and faith, but I didn't think that the presentation we had on the first go round of the parking garage convinced anybody on the financial aspects of it; lets get somebody independent and try again. This is a lot of money especially in a tight budget and I hope this study will work out better than the previous ones.

Councilor Devine inquired about **Items 22.** and **24.**, noting that both of the projects are in the Mentor Protégé Program. She reminded the City Manager of the request for an update in January 2009 on where we are with the Mentor Protégé Program. We need to bring in the mentors and protégés to make sure the program is working as designed.

Upon motion by Mr. Davis, seconded by Ms. Devine, Council voted unanimously to approve the **Consent Agenda Items 12.** through **24.** on a single motion. **Item 25.** was approved by a separate motion. Mr. Rickenmann was not present for the vote.

CONSIDERATION OF BIDS, AGREEMENTS and CHANGE ORDERS

12. Council is asked to approve the Purchase of One (1) Powerpack, One (1) Saw Package and One (1) Handheld Breaker. Award to Jim & Slim's Tool Supply located in Largo, FL. and Goodlett Equipment located in Cayce, SC, the lowest bidders in the amount of \$10,692.15. *Funding Source: 1012303-657400 & 1012303-658400 - Approved*

13. Council is asked to approve the Purchase of a Ground Hog Wireless Camera System, as requested by the Police Department. Award to Law Enforcement Associates, as a Sole Source in the amount of \$12,348.95. This vendor is located in Raleigh, N.C. *Funding Source: 2659999/658600 JL 9208000106/658600 - Approved*
14. Council is asked to approve Project SD827903; Agreement for Preparation of a Sediment and Erosion Control Plan, Grading Plan, Storm Water Pollution Plan, Notice of Intent Form and Stream Analysis for Stream Improvements in Martin Luther King Park, as requested by Engineering Services. Award to Woolpert, Incorporated in the amount of \$17,983.00. This vendor is located in Columbia, SC. *Funding Source: Stormwater Utility Budget - Approved*
15. Council is asked to approve Project Winton Avenue "Fencing", as requested by Utilities and Engineering. Award to Cherokee, Inc., the lowest bidder in the amount of \$21,302.00. This vendor is located in Columbia, SC. *Funding Source: CP900001 - Approved*
16. Council is asked to approve the Purchase of a Ford E-350 12 Passenger Van, as requested by Parking Operations. Award to Benson Ford, using the State Contract in the amount of \$21,643.00. This vendor is located in Easley, SC. *Funding Source: 5312501-658500 - Approved*
17. Council is asked to approve the Purchase of a Ford F-250, as requested by the Traffic Engineering Division. Award to Vic Bailey Ford, using the SC State Contract in the amount of \$21,845.00. This vendor is located in Spartanburg, SC. *Funding Source: 1013204-658500 - Approved*
18. Council is asked to approve the Agreement for Professional Services to complete an Application for Financial Assistance through the South Carolina Transportation Infrastructure Bank for Roadway Improvements to Portions of North Main Street, Harden Street and Assembly Street, as requested by Engineering Services. Award to the Dennis Corporation in the amount of \$35,000.00. This vendor is located in Columbia, SC. *Funding Source: Capital Improvements Program - Approved*
19. Council is asked to approve the Purchase of an Aerial Lift Device, as requested by the Traffic and Engineering Department. Award to Map Enterprise, Inc., the lowest bidder in the amount of \$40,616.13. This vendor is located in Graham, N.C. *Funding Source: 1013204-631700 - Approved*
20. Council is asked to approve the Parking Study Consultant Contract, as requested by Parking Services. Award to Wilbur Smith & Associates in the amount of \$57,500 for basic services outlined in the Scope of Work plus reimbursable not to exceed \$3,000. *Funding Source: 2005 Parking Revenue Bond - Approved*
21. Council is asked to approve the Purchase of Four (4) Trash Trucks with 16' Steel Platform Dump Body, as requested by Fleet Services. Award to Magic City Ford, the lowest bidder in the amount of \$220,640.00. This vendor is located in Roanoke, VA. *Funding Source: 6308972-658500 - Approved*

22. Council is asked to approve Project SD8325; Agreement for Storm Drainage System Mapping and Analysis in the Shandon / Rosewood Area Drainage Basin, as requested by Engineering Services. Award to Cox and Dinkins (C&D) in the amount of \$282,600.00. This vendor is located in Columbia, SC. Funding Source: *Stormwater Utility Budget – This is a Mentor Protégé Program - Approved*
23. Council is asked to approve Project SS678603; Manhole Rehabilitation Annual Maintenance Contract, as requested by Utilities & Engineering. Award to Mechanical Jobbers in the amount of \$468,750.00. This vendor is located in Lithonia, GA. Funding Source: SS678603-851600 - *This project received waiver to the Subcontracting Outreach Program of City-funded construction of Two Hundred Thousand (\$200,000) Dollars or more due to the specialty nature of work required. - Approved*
24. Council is asked to approve Project SS7073; Agreement for Services Concerning the Repair and Rehabilitation of a 48-Inch and 54-Inch Gravity Sewer Line Located in the City of Columbia Between the North Columbia and West Columbia Pump Stations, as requested by Engineering Services. Award to B P Barber & Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$492,000.00. This vendor is located in Columbia, SC. *Funding Source: Capital Improvements Program Sewer Budget – This is a Mentor Protégé Program - Approved*
25. Council is asked to approve Project WM4012; Emergency Repair of Melrose Elevated Tank, as requested by Utilities and Engineering. Award to Chao and Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$320,000 for a Revised Estimate of \$1,840,000.00. This vendor is located in Columbia, SC. *Funding Source: Water Improvement Fund - Approved*

Councilor Finlay asked for an update on the revisions to **Item 25**.

Mr. John Dooley, Director of Utilities of Engineering explained that Chao and Associates provided a preliminary estimate on the reconstruction of the Melrose Tank and this is the additional cost required to fix the tank.

Councilor Finlay asked if this is apart of our budget.

Mr. John Dooley, Director of Utilities of Engineering said that it is higher than we started out.

Councilor Finlay noted that if this is above then something else will have to be below. Is that correct?

Mr. John Dooley, Director of Utilities of Engineering agreed that something will have to be below or something will have to be put off. We do have the money to do this.

Councilor Finlay said that he just wanted to understand this. This money is going to be encumbered so we then know that we have less money that can be spent on projects. He requested a monthly or quarterly report on where we are in the water and sewer process.

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Rickenmann, Council voted unanimously to approve Project WM4012; Emergency Repair of Melrose Elevated Tank, as requested by Utilities and Engineering. Award to Chao an Associates, Inc. in the amount of \$320,000 for a Revised Estimate of \$1,840,000.00. This vendor is located in Columbia, SC.

Mr. John Dooley, Director of Utilities of Engineering said that the Council approved two (2) Mentor-Protégé Program projects and he recognized Gene Dinkins and Sam Salvage as the Mentor-Protégé Team for one of those projects.

ORDINANCES – SECOND READING

25a. ****Ordinance No.:** 2008-065 - Authorizing a property tax credit to taxpayers within the corporate limits of the City of Columbia for installation of fire sprinkler systems in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. §12-6-3622 – *First reading approval was given on December 10, 2008. Approved on second reading.*

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager reported that last night he sent information from Fire Chief Anderson to the members of Council regarding the financial impact of this ordinance as requested by Mr. Finlay.

Councilor Finlay asked Chief Anderson to explain the information to them.

Mr. Bradley Anderson, Chief of the Columbia Fire Department explained that it is very difficult to get this process locked down. We have talked to different installers and we have received different numbers. We provided two examples of what the City's liability might be for different types of structures. If someone was to install a sprinkler system that wasn't required into a single family home we estimate that it would be a \$213 annual liability for the City. It was brought to my attention this morning that the ordinance is written in such a way that we wouldn't reimburse for a sprinkler tap, which would bring that number down a little bit. If a 16-story, 125,000 square foot high rise building was retrofit and it already had convertible pipes in it, then much of the infrastructure would already be in place for the sprinkler and the City's liability for that would be \$12,500 per year for four (4) years. It's hard to get a handle on this and in the economic downturn that we have we don't expect that many people would want to do this.

Mayor Coble asked wouldn't we save money in fighting fires.

Mr. Bradley Anderson, Chief of the Columbia Fire Department said absolutely and thanks for pointing that out. We did a study on twelve (12) years of residential fires and based on the area of the fire in the residence we believe that fifty five (55) lives could have been saved and three hundred sixty (360) citizens would not have been injured by fire if there were sprinkler systems present. A direct payback to the City is that two hundred forty six (246) firefighters probably would not have been injured. This relates directly to workers compensation costs, overtime costs and it would have offset \$56 million in known property losses, which also helps to preserve the tax base.

Mr. Ken E. Gaines, City Attorney explained that it's voluntary. The International Code Council (ICC) passed a requirement for all new residential and new town homes to have sprinkler systems installed.

Councilor Cromartie asked how that will impact major renovations being done in 2011.

Mr. Ken E. Gaines, City Attorney said that according to the ICC it's related to new construction not renovation construction. If the upgrades are being done this year in 2008, then they can apply for the credit this year, because the ordinance is effective today upon second reading. If they installed it this year and it's not required by code or regulation then they can apply for the credit, but they have to go through some hoops to get it. The legislation requires the governing body to consent and this only applies to City of Columbia taxes not Richland County taxes.

Councilor Davis said that everybody knows his position when it comes to fire safety. My thoughts are that in some cases it will be cost prohibitive. I looked at the summary and don't want to see us hindering development, especially in areas where we are trying to recruit folks.

Mr. Bradley Anderson, Chief of the Columbia Fire Department reiterated that this is for the voluntary installation of sprinkler systems; this is a rebate that the City will provide and it is not required.

Councilor Finlay said that he is willing to move forward with this, but we need some type of annual review. My guess is that this won't be used frequently, but I am concerned about having a very large retrofit on an existing complex that doesn't have sprinklers.

Mr. Ken E. Gaines, City Attorney said that the application process would be tracked through the Finance Department and they have to complete a Department of Revenue form to get the rebate.

Councilor Finlay asked if that would show up as a liability, because it will be a three (3) year liability.

Mr. Bradley Anderson, Chief of the Columbia Fire Department said that it will be a four (4) year liability.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Budget Director said that it will be a liability for the years that we are committed to paying.

Councilor Finlay asked that this be listed as a single liability line.

Councilor Davis said that he has heartburn about the future affordability for single family housing and new construction, but I don't know how we are going to address that.

Mr. Bradley Anderson, Chief of the Columbia Fire Department reiterated that this is a voluntary incentive to assist people, but it doesn't require them to do it.

Upon motion by Mayor Coble, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to give second reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2008-065 - Authorizing a property tax credit to taxpayers within the corporate limits of the City of Columbia for installation of fire sprinkler systems in compliance with S.C. Code Ann. §12-6-3622.

25b. ****Ordinance No.: 2008-106 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 14, Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions, Article VII Prostitution – *First reading approval was given on December 3, 2008. Second reading consideration was deferred.***

Councilor Cromartie explained that he asked the City Manager to make a revision to the ordinance. He said that he was concerned when he read an article in *The Pulse* that was mistaken. It reads "E.W. Cromartie feels that a proposed change in the City's prostitution ordinance, making public sex illegal in the City limits, goes too far." Of course I made no reference about prostitution. I received a lot of calls on that and I understand that there are people perhaps around this table that have something to do with *The Pulse*. If they are in the process of quoting me then I want to make sure that any quotes involving E.W. Cromartie are accurate and it doesn't directly disregard the truth. I can assure you as a lawyer that the remarks in quotation are absolutely not what I said. I want to move forward with the ordinance with the revisions as indicated.

Councilor Rickenmann said that several people called him about this ordinance also. Does this address a rock show as well?

Mr. Ken E. Gaines, City Attorney said that he will look into that and get back with Mr. Rickenmann.

Councilor Finlay said that it is interesting that how ever we move on this it will have to be an interpretative deal. The key is that we set out with an ordinance that eliminates a specific problem in public parks and that's what we started out to do. I support the ordinance and I think we should move forward while realizing that there are live simulcasts and as things move forward we are going to be critiqued in a much shorter window than we've ever been in the past. There are several new blogs out there in the City and I am sure that people all over the place have something to do with them; it is the reality of where we are now.

Councilor Devine said that it is our job to make sure we are addressing an issue that was raised. She said that the issue Mr. Cromartie raised resulted on this language. I want an opinion on Mr. Rickenmann's concern and I hope that we all understand that this makes the ordinance better and stronger.

Councilor Davis agreed adding that as long as we all understand and are comfortable with the intent then that gives us the latitude down the road to tweak the ordinance; the feedback and reactions lets us know if we are on target.

A motion made by Mr. Cromartie and seconded by Ms. Devine to give second reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2008-106 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 14, Offenses and Miscellaneous Provisions, Article VII Prostitution was withdrawn.

ORDINANCES – FIRST READING

26. Ordinance No.: 2008-107 – Annexing 1313 Rosewood Drive Richland County TMS # 11208-01-02 – *Approved on first reading.*

Upon motion by Dr. Gergel, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to give first reading approval to Ordinance No.: 2008-107 – Annexing 1313 Rosewood Drive Richland County TMS # 11208-01-02.

RESOLUTIONS

27. Resolution No.: R-2008-054 – Supporting the Better Me Employee Wellness Program – *Approved – Please refer to Item B3. under Staff Reports.*

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to approve **Items 28.** through **31.** with a single motion.

28. Resolution No.: R-2008-064 – Release and Abandonment of the City Existing 15' Water Main Easement Along Richland County TMS # 13903-05-61 & 62 (Portion); 3022 Gervais Street & 3026 Gervais Street; CIP Project # WM4154; CF # 95-06 (R-1) & CF # 250-253 - *Approved*

29. Resolution No.: R-2008-065 – Authorizing Condemnation to Acquire Water Main Easements Along Richland County TMS # 15000-05-06 for Water Main Along Community to Wilson Boulevard; CIP Project #WM3928; CF#250-232 - *Approved*

30. Resolution No.: R-2008-066 - In Support of Rescheduling the City's 2009 King Day Celebration - *Approved*
31. Resolution No.: R-2008-067 – Authorizing the Five Points Association to conduct Street and Sidewalk Sales for the “St. Pat’s” in Five Points Festival - *Approved*

REPORTS AND UPDATES

- A. ****City Manager’s Report – Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager**

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager recognized Mr. Ken Wiggins, Purchasing Agent for earning his Certified Public Purchasing Officers credential recently. He is among seventy one (71) professionals who have successfully completed the CPO examination. Operation Taking Back Our City is a project that we believe has made an impact on the City of Columbia and our quality of life. This morning you will hear a report from our Police Chief that will talk to you more specifically about the role the Police Department participated in taking back our City. I want to briefly talk to you about some of the other contributions that are being made from the other departments that are involved. I am very pleased that the departments by large are communicating, coordinating and cooperating with one another to address those quality of life issues that we recognize as threats to our community. We are building a Comprehensive Crime, Safety and Security Plan. It will of course focus around our Police Department, but the intent is to highlight our One Mission, One Message, One Columbia theme for this year and we want Columbia of course to be a clean, safe, healthy and active City. Our Fire Department has a very significant role in this process and one of the things we recognize particularly as a result of the Code Enforcement Taskforce Report is that we need to increase the number of Deputy Fire Marshalls. We’ve asked Chief Anderson to prepare a plan to increase the number of Deputy Fire Marshalls by five (5). He has done that and we will move forward with that as one of our priorities. The Fire Department’s primary goal is to prevent deaths and injuries to citizens and firefighters and to prevent the loss of property. A secondary goal is to enforce property maintenance requirements that contribute to our quality of life to include repairs to broken windows and screens, clearing underbrush, removing graffiti and keeping exterior walls and trim painted. In the short-term, an Assistant Fire Marshal has been designated to concentrate on quality of life issues and will be actively involved in that process. The Homeland Security Department is also intricately involved in the process. All but one of the neighborhood Community Safety Officers (CSOs) has been cross-trained to become active in assisting our Development Services staff with front yard parking and other code violations. They will be participants in the BluePrince system; a system that was developed by Mr. Mylott for tracking issues to ensure that they don’t remain on the board for a prolonged period of time.

Councilor Devine said that since CSOs work different hours than the normal code enforcement staff there will be more opportunities for them to identify violations. Have we put in place a mechanism for community residents to call and report issues to CSOs that are in their neighborhoods so they can quickly respond to the issue?

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that is another phase we need to implement, but we will be working on having another mechanism by which those reports can be made; for right now we have depended on persons calling Development Services or their personal contacts. By the time I give my next report we will have worked out a process that will allow for those calls to be received.

Councilor Finlay said that while this is a long-term goal in the Fire Department, I would like to have a deliverable on when the five (5) new Deputy Fire Marshals will be on the job and helping.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that he will get with Chief Anderson to identify a more specific timeline by which we would expect to have that in place. He continued reporting on the CSOs by stating that thus far they have made 6,530 community contacts during October and 5,779 community contacts during November. We have encouraged them to become vigilant as it relates to ringing doorbells, making phone calls, walking the communities to ensure that they are actually in physical contact with people; it's not enough to just call people and leave a message; we expect them along with the Residential Patrol Officers to have some physical contact and be able to talk with people so we can get a better feel for what types of issues are affecting our communities. One component of the Taking Back Our City project that has really become a significant partner is our 911 Communications Team. I can't say enough about Mike King and his role as Director and how he has been enthusiastic in bringing the 911 Team in as part of this. Mike has been very active himself in terms of attending community meetings, because I think it means a lot when a Director is able to talk about how calls are prioritized and what his staff does in terms of receiving calls and what their training and backgrounds are. That has become a critical part of the process. They are also providing Public Service Announcements on Channel 2 and they are instrumental in terms of helping people better understand what the 911 Communications Center does other than just receiving emergency calls. They often times are the only contact that people might have with us particularly by telephone. Our Planning & Development Services Department continues to actively participate in this project. Marc either goes to the Police Department's COMPSTAT meetings or he makes sure one of his senior staff members are there. It's my understanding that as a result of those meetings they have been able to respond to situations on a timely basis and I believe it has been helpful across the board as it relates to different issues. Recently Marc asked me about the prospect of issuing badges to his Code Enforcement Officers and I have authorized that; I do believe it will be helpful to them in terms of officially identifying their roles with the City. Since October 25, 2008, inspectors have started 656 new code enforcement cases; 50 new housing cases; 112 property maintenance cases related to litter and overgrown lots or premises; 165 abandoned/derelict vehicles; 186 roll carts; and 143 zoning cases which are primarily front-yard parking violations. In the same time, inspectors have resolved 695 cases, 490 of which were opened prior to October 25th. They are certainly very active in terms of what they have been asked to do while recognizing the correlation between those points for concealment of criminal activity and their relativity to affecting the quality of life in our neighborhoods. Our Public Works Department continues to work on the lighting assessment. Recently, there were a couple of tours and we would encourage you to let us know of concerns within your respective areas so we can schedule a lighting tour.

Councilor Devine said that the Greenview Community and more specifically North Main Street near the fire station need to be looked at.

Councilor Cromartie said that we also mentioned doing an assessment and putting lighting in the area of Two Notch Road and Chestnut Street along with Bailey Street.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager asked Mr. Cromartie to speak with Ms. Gentry before leaving today to get an accurate update.

Councilor Davis said that we should also get SCE&G to take a look at those corridors. Look at Farrow Road, parts of North Main Street, parts of Monticello Road; there are dark spots and if they could do that, that would help with what we are trying to do. One in particular is the section between North Main and Wilkes Road to the shopping center; there is an issue of City versus county, but either way everybody would benefit from that.

Councilor Gergel said that she has been involved in 4-5 tours since the end of October. Most recently Code Enforcement did a sweep through Rochelle Heights and I cannot tell you how important these activities are.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that it is very helpful when we communicate those concerns, because we can then schedule the tours and that gives us some immediate insight into where problem areas are.

Councilor Finlay requested that they tour Hampton Hill and an update on the status of lighting.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that as complaints come in, Ms. Gentry is communicating with SCE&G to get those issues addressed, but we are also asking employees as well as citizens in general to report lighting deficiencies or inoperable lighting. I am very encouraged by the enthusiasm that she and her staff have taken as it relates to this particular aspect of the project. The Community Development Department continues to work on the "Super Saturday" events. Mr. Lawton and his staff are trying to conduct a "Super Saturday" event in each of the four (4) districts at least once per quarter. The Super Saturday Event held in Council District 3 on October 25, 2008 was attended by approximately fifty (50) neighborhood residents. We had one previously in North Columbia and we had one scheduled, but it was canceled due to inclement weather. We have rescheduled that Clean Up campaign for January 24, 2009 and we would encourage everyone who can to come out and assist us. Finally, Parks & Recreation and the PALs in the Park Project; I want to commend Mr. Baker and his staff along with Chief Carter and Sgt. McCary for the efforts they have put forth. We want to extend a general invitation to all of our staff and anyone who might be interested in getting involved with our PALs in the Park Program; particularly we are trying to get our faith community actively engaged. We've asked churches in various parts of this City to adopt the City parks nearest their place of worship. We believe that can become a very strong relationship and it can have a significant impact. We've watched as the PALs in the Park Project has begun to grow and the impact that has happened. Going into the spring we will begin to see innovative aspects that will set Columbia apart from other PALs projects around the country.

Mayor Coble suggested that one (1) additional partner would be the Solicitor. I would ask that we discuss a contractual matter in Executive Session. It's the dedicated Solicitor that we had before, but we need to retune it. We had one individual who was causing multiple issues and having the same Solicitor there would have helped navigate the lawyers. The other thing is having a Solicitor to go to our neighborhood meetings, because the prosecution of criminals is something that is critical to neighborhoods. Solicitor Giese has offered to reinstitute that on a 6-month basis and then we can sit down and talk about the cost. I think it is a good thing to have that as part of the team as opposed to it just being a function that's over there somewhere; we can have them all on the front line.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that one of the things he is more focused on is the idea of the 72 hour turn around time for complaints; that is an expectation when we receive complaints and concerns from you or citizens. There should be an initial progress report within the first 72 hours. In fact I have begun randomly calling persons as I know about their complaint to determine if in fact someone has responded to them and if not I will need to know why there hasn't been a response. There should be a follow-up within five (5) days. A complainant needs to be advised and given a timeframe on anything that's going to take seven (7) days or more. I have implemented my own system of quality control to be sure that we are following up in a timely manner and that the answers we are giving our citizens are timely and accurate.

B. Staff Reports

B1. Comprehensive Plan – Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of Columbia Police Department

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department started off by saying that this is the first phase of three. I am going to invite the Human Resources Director to talk to you about why people are leaving and whether or not our pay is competitive. Then I will talk about retention strategies.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that he will talk about the reasons why police officers are leaving the City based on 151 completed exit interviews over a four (4) year period. I think that you will find that money is not the number one issue and if we looked across the board you will find that our employment package is more comprehensive than most. The first item is career advancement; we've lost 34 officers over a four year period, which is 22.5%.

Mayor Coble asked Mr. Gilliam if these officers took a job somewhere else.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that according to the Exit Interview Form they were taking opportunities in other cities to advance their careers. It's not always in law enforcement, because some individuals have gone into family businesses or some have gone back to school.

Councilor Davis requested a percentage breakdown on that.

Councilor Devine asked how the Exit Interviews are done.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources explained that some of them are done face-to-face, but there is a form that they are given and this information comes from that form. The form indicates the primary reason for leaving; attitude towards your job; the variety of the tasks; and opportunities in the City. There is another portion about pay issues and what you think about pay. Another area talks about working conditions, management and coworkers. Mostly, the statistics that I am providing are primary reasons. If I break this out into money, those percentages would go down even further. We are only losing 7 or 8 officers per year due to money.

Councilor Finlay stated that if money were the only issue we would only lose 7 or 8 officers per year.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that's right; yes sir.

Councilor Finlay asked Mr. Gilliam if he is concluding that if our turnover was only 7 or 8 people per year we would be able to have sufficient new hires to fill all our vacancies.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources replied yes sir. There are a lot of other things that you have to consider. Officers are not disappointed with their pay; these individuals have opportunities for overtime that other agencies don't have and that is a big part of it as well. We've had 31 individuals to retire within that four year period, which is 20.5%. Again 20 individuals said that their primary reason for leaving was more money and that's 13.2%.

Mayor Coble asked if this was before we increased their salaries.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that he has the figures for 2008, but he didn't segregate that from January to June versus July to December. I can assure you that the officers are very pleased with what you are doing.

Councilor Finlay said that the retention pay didn't start until July 1, 2008.

Councilor Gergel asked if that had anything to do with overtime.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that it has something to do with it. On average in the Police Department you are looking at an additional \$6,000 per individual working overtime.

Councilor Finlay said that's \$1.8 million of their budget.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said it's \$1.9 million.

Councilor Finlay asked how big their budget is.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said approximately \$25 million.

Councilor Finlay said that's 8%.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources continued to report that a number of folks left for personal reasons. I didn't dig to ask what the personal reasons were; we just left it at that. We had some that stayed home with a child or there was a new birth in the family; those kinds of things.

Mayor Coble asked what the number was.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said 18 or 11.9%. There were 13 dismissals, which is 8.6%. We had ten (10) individuals to relocate, which is 6.8%. We have eight (8) individuals or 5.3% that went into the military; keep in mind that a number of individuals took contracting jobs where they were paid big money to go overseas for the war. A lot of those folks enlisted fulltime after September 11, 2001. There were seven (7) that left for medical reasons, which is 4.6% and five (5) or 3.3% left for other reasons.

Councilor Devine asked what qualifies as career advancement. If they left to go into another field, I would not call that career advancement per se, because they are not staying in the law enforcement field. If they are leaving because they feel there are more opportunities for advancement outside of our Police Department then we need to address that.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that you will find that you have to outline a career path as an individual comes in as a patrolman so he has some idea of where he's going. There were three (3) individuals that had problems with testing; one (1) had an issue with vacation; and one (1) with scheduling.

Mayor Coble said that this is very valuable information. He suggested that they further drill down to see what's happening and what needs to be corrected.

Councilor Rickenmann asked Mr. Gilliam if he was going to talk about recruitment. Do you have an active role in that?

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that the Human Resources Department is going to get involved more and more with recruiting.

Councilor Cromartie asked if Human Resources is directly involved in recruiting new employees for all departments.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said yes sir; we do internet postings of all the jobs and we go to different career fairs. We receive an average of 170 applications per week. We don't have a shortage of applicants, but sometimes there is a shortage of applicants meeting the minimum qualifications.

Councilor Davis asked what Human Resources does to communicate with folks that want to come in and complete an application and those that may have been granted an interview.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources explained that every individual that submits an application is sent a letter notifying them if they are qualified or disqualified for the position.

Councilor Davis asked what the timeframe is for that communication.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that the timeframe has been five (5) days. If an applicant qualifies, we will copy their application and submit it to the individual departments. The department will review the application and make a decision on whether or not to interview the individual. We have a standardized letter that should be sent to all applicants either from the respective department or Human Resources.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that effective January 1st he has asked the Human Resources Director to delineate the HR functions of which they should be responsible and one of those should be contacting applicants. There was some mutual agreement at one point with the department heads that once a selection was made the department head would take the responsibility for notifying the applicants; that obviously has not worked and I have instructed the Director of Human Resources that that is an HR function and we should not run the risk of delegating that to somebody else. Once a decision is made that department head should notify Human Resources of who has been selected and there should be two letters; one to the person who has been selected and the other letter goes to those persons who were not selected.

Councilor Cromartie asked the City Manager how he will ensure that this takes place, because department heads haven't been getting that information to HR in a timely fashion. Are you going to make sure that they do it and there are consequences when it's not done?

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said yes sir, because as part of what I've asked the director to submit to me it should include timelines as it relates to interviews and notifications. I will request reports on a regular basis. My concerns were born out of the concerns you expressed to me regarding our failure to notify people of decisions when they have applied for positions.

Councilor Devine suggested that we implement an online application process and a tracking mechanism. If I apply for a job with the State, I can go in and confirm that my application was received, reviewed and all that stuff. She expressed concerns about the negative decline in officer's attitudes towards the job, task variety and opportunities. It is clear that people are not feeling good about the Police Department for various reasons and we need to be cognizant of that as we talk about recruiting and retaining officers.

Councilor Gergel asked when the exit interviews are conducted.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that the Police Department has a unique process; they have sign up sheets that determine when they will have exit interview.

Councilor Gergel believes that the closer it is to the time they are leaving then the more accurate the information is.

Councilor Rickenmann said that it would be beneficial for Council to receive a report outlining the various employee processes in HR. I want a clear path so that I understand what the process is from start to finish; who is responsible for the process; how it's followed up; and any changes that will be made to the system.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that he is looking for a comprehensive approach to dealing with the application through the duration of a person's tenure with us, because when and if there are breakdowns I need to know where that breakdown occurred so I will know who to hold accountable. Heretofore we've operated in a matter where if there was a breakdown the response would depend on who you talk to. There are some issues that we will be able to bring inline.

Councilor Finlay said that it might be a benefit to have someone outside of the Police Department conducting the exit interviews.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that his office does the exit interview; they have one that they do, but we do it as well.

Councilor Finlay asked if Human Resources compared its exit interviews with the Police Departments. It would be interesting to see if they overlap or if there are differences. In 2008 it says that 31 exit interviews were done, but we've had more people leave than that.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said right; that's correct.

Councilor Finlay asked when the 31 officers left, because the number for this year was 43. So we are twelve (12) interviews behind.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said either behind or they didn't show up to do the exit interviews, because that was as of last Thursday.

Councilor Finlay said that in 2007 there were forty eight (48) exit interviews but more people left the department.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department reported that they have lost 197 officers over a four (4) year period. These statistics are reflective of 151 exit interviews.

Councilor Finlay asked if 197 officers have left as of today.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said yes, for a four year period that's the year-to-date total.

Councilor Finlay said that we have lost about 12 more people per year than reflected in the report. We are seeing that 25% of the people leaving the department aren't doing an exit interview and from experience that's not because they have a lot of good things to say; they hit the door mad and those are the people that we have to get a grip on understanding their concerns.

Councilor Devine said that some of those could be people who were dismissed.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that we have a number of individuals that are discharged for different reasons.

Mayor Coble asked if a retiree would do an exit interview.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said yes.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said everybody at the Police Department does an exit interview.

Councilor Cromartie asked if there was a way to ensure that the exit interviews are done.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said no sir, but most of the time particularly in the Police Department those folks give notice far in advance so you have an opportunity to get that exit interview done.

Councilor Finlay requested that Mr. Gilliam's report be updated to include the number of people that left the department annually; the number that did or did not complete the exit interview; and a breakdown of the various positions that were vacated.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that while he is specifically interested in the attrition at the Police Department, he is even more interested in having a more comprehensive process so that we will know why any person leaves. We need to focus on understanding what kinds of things we are doing and what can be done better to improve our retention rate.

Councilor Devine asked that Mr. Gilliam include in his report who was discharged or who left voluntarily but did not participate in an exit interview.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources reiterated that he doesn't see pay as being an issue; there are other agencies that will have a higher starting salary than us, but you can overcome that immediately with benefits to include insurance and holidays. We are very competitive, but it is something that we can look at and make recommendations on.

Councilor Finlay said that this Council will have to think about the changes we make to our insurance program, because that will have a direct impact on hiring. It is two-fold; they want great insurance, but they also want the higher salary and unfortunately we're not going to be able to do both on a long-term basis without some major structural changes.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that we learned that we need to fine tune the instrument for exit interviews to get the kind of data that we really need. It is important that as we look at losses that we determine what it cost to maintain an employee until they leave the Police Department. I want to emphasize that this is the first phase of three phases. This phase will outline what we can do in the next six (6) months. We hired 216 new officers over the last four years to date and it cost us \$5,914,728. We had 197 losses during the same four (4) year period.

Councilor Finlay said that we have netted eleven (11) officers.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department clarified that it was nineteen (19) officers. When you compare that over a four (4) year period it cost us \$27,383 total for procedural, associated and equipment costs. This is a ballpark figure, because you also have to look at what it cost us with the loss of people. Today we have twenty-one (21) vacancies. We have developed a mass marketing strategy related to recruitment and retention. He presented a density analysis map which shows all of the part one crimes that have occurred since January 1, 2005 until November 11, 2008. Those are major crimes including murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault; the major crimes that we are required to report to the State and Federal agencies. The map shown represents 42,000 part one crimes and the City of Columbia averages 8,000 part one crimes per year. We are proposing an Officer Residency Program, wherein a \$10,000 incentive will be offered to officers that live in the areas with the largest concentration of crime. Those funds will be used for officers to purchase a home. The incentive would decrease for officers moving into areas with less crime. A lot more restrictions will be placed upon the individual officers. They will be required to live in the house for at least five (5) years; they can't rent it; we will provide them with a car; we will ask them to get actively involved in community associations, neighborhood watch; and we will pay them up to ten (10) hours a month in overtime.

Councilor Devine asked if the car and the overtime would be above the \$10,000 incentive.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said yes in addition to that.

Councilor Finlay suggested that the incentive be provided as a pay increase, because it would be very difficult to recoup the incentive from the purchase of a house if an officer left the City. We need to be careful so we don't end up in a position where we have several hundred thousand dollars tied up in residential real estate or down payments.

Councilor Devine said that it would not be difficult.

Councilor Rickenmann says that he views it differently. Look at all of the houses we are involved in through Community Development. Why can't we just provide rent free housing?

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that he had discussions about using the Housing First Program and rehabbing houses as well; this is just an alternative. One of the things I like about this is that it is a recruitment tool; it's something that we offer that nobody else does. It makes us more attractive than any other Police Department.

Mayor Coble said that there will always be some number of vacancies, but what is the average.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that over the four (4) year period there have been 20 or more vacancies. My goal is to fill all of our vacancies by the end of this fiscal year. I am very optimistic and encouraged about that. Our recruiter has 80 applicants that he has to screen today. We never had 80 applicants at one time. My goal is to also encourage the Police Department to get out there and fill these vacancies. I would recommend a longevity incentive for new hires to give them some incentive to stay here. For three (3) years they would receive \$1,500 and for completing five (5) years you can collect a \$5,000 incentive.

Councilor Finlay said that we should start off with Mr. Rickenmann's idea of rent free units and once you have someone that is working out in the department you can offer them the housing allowance and longevity bonus. This limits the issues of sudden dramatic turnover.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that when someone leaves for career advancement someone should find out how many years he/she has been here. We have 336 sworn officers; 52 of those reside in the corporate City limits; 12 of them have cars. This incentive is to purchase 15 additional vehicles over the next 4 years.

Councilor Cromartie asked how soon this could be done.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that it depends on the availability of stock cars. We have 233 vehicles in our fleet today to include unmarked cars.

Councilor Devine suggested that Chief Carter revise the incentive to state that take home cars will now be issued to officers who currently reside in the City of Columbia upon availability.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department concurred.

Councilor Cromartie said that four years is a long time from a community perspective. Is there a way to get vehicles to officers living in the City quicker than that?

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that this can't be done fast without having a rippling effect.

Councilor Finlay said that we have a General Obligation (GO) bonding capacity of \$3 million. Can we use that to equip the Police Department?

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director said that there are opportunities for a capital lease.

Councilor Finlay said that there will never be a better time to buy cars. My priority is going to be funding the Police Department, but that we also put requirements on performance. I would ask that we have a proposal in January to use the little bit of GO bonding capacity that we have left to move forward with the equipment proposals from the Police Department to include cars, tasers and other equipment. This will take one reason off the table as to why we don't succeed.

Mayor Coble stated that by then we will know more about the Stimulus Package and how we can take all of that into account.

Councilor Devine said that she supports Mr. Finlay's suggestion, pending a look at the big picture. She asked if there are any officers with take home cars that do not live in the City.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said yes, but they are specialized people that have to respond during emergencies.

Councilor Davis said that the new vehicles should be phased into areas that we view as high priorities. He inquired about the cars being parked at substations on a daily basis.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that some of the cars sitting at the substations may not start. He explained that these cars are driven 24/7; a lot of miles are put on these vehicles; and there are maintenance issues. He reported that 51% of the rolling stock is in excess of \$50,000.

Councilor Devine asked if the recommendation to purchase 15 new vehicles is based on the 52 officers already living in the City.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department explained that it's also taking into account increasing those numbers over five (5) years.

Councilor Gergel said that pending the Chief's recommendations she would be supportive of using every resource available to get these police cars as quickly as we can. We want officers living in some of the worst areas in our City and we will have to provide an incentive.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department recommended that a bonus be provided for existing police personnel that recruit new officers that complete the probationary period. I will start this in January 2009 after the City Manager has approved the incentives. Also, in January 2009 we are planning a Community Recruiter Program wherein community leaders and citizens will learn the State requirements and screening criteria for Police Officers; to talk about recruiting and retention; and we will ask them to refer individuals to us that are interested in law enforcement. I did this in Shelby, North Carolina and it takes about one year to see this work and be able to reap the benefits of doing this. We are looking at streamlining our application process to make it easier. The process is too cumbersome and people want to complete it online; they want to save it to their computer; so we are looking at all of those things to make it easier. We also found that applicants have to pay for their credit reports to go along with the application and we want to eliminate that cost; we make them pay for their training uniforms and we want to eliminate that cost; and they pay for job related physical agility testing and we want to eliminate that cost.

Councilor Devine said that the Community Development Department has credit reporting software.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that there are license requirements that we may have a problem with.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that we will check into it.

Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development said that they do have software that allows them to pull credit reports.

Councilor Finlay said that we are losing 50 +/- officers a year, but we only plan to hire 24 new officers. Unless we dramatically curtail departures over the next six months or increase the number from 24 to 36 we aren't going to meet that six (6) month goal.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that we can reduce that over a period of time through attrition, a healthy training program and by having access to equipment and technology. If you have a finite number of people and you can't create anymore then you have to reorganize the stock. We took the Special Operations Division and put the like tasks together into Community Policing. The average community will start to see a larger presence of police. Those units are Crime Prevention, School Resource Officers, Traffic Unit, K-9 Supervisor, Mounted Patrol and CRT Operations.

Councilor Davis asked about officers being on foot and bicycle patrol in the neighborhoods.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that officers from CRT Operations will be placed in neighborhoods and you will begin to see that after 30-days.

Councilor Devine asked if this could be implemented immediately in light of the holiday season.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that additional time is needed to get people indoctrinated and schedules adjusted.

Councilor Cromartie said that there are landlords with nice apartments who are desirous of lending those apartments to the City.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that we certainly need to look at those options and we need to be clear about any expectations of those landlords.

Councilor Rickenmann inquired about other options such as staggered shifts.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that officers have requested staggered shifts, especially in the South Region wherein you have one (1) or two (2) people covering a much larger area. You will start to see the patrol zones shrink, because there will be more people patrolling. The regional Captains are looking at power shifts as it relates to crime patterns. He explained that they will need to update the City of Columbia Use of Force Policy to include conductive energy weapons also known as tasers. We plan on providing tasers to 69 first responders. These tasers will come with digital recording. Councilor Davis asked to review the Use of Force Policy.

Councilor Devine asked if confiscated money can be used to purchase weapons.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that they are having those discussions now.

Councilor Finlay said that even if we can use the drug money we still need to look at our GO bonding capacity to get these weapons.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department recommended that T3 Mobile vehicles be provided to eight (8) foot patrol officers to increase visibility; that eight (8) fully equipped bicycles be provided; and that four (4) off-road utility vehicles be used to patrol City parks and riverfront areas.

Councilor Rickenmann that's why I thought we had the Park Rangers so that the officers don't have to patrol those areas and can handle the calls in neighborhoods.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that an off-road utility vehicle will be used at the Zoo and the Three Rivers Greenway.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that there are some areas where there is crime activity going on and those are the areas he is focusing on.

Mayor Coble said that everybody gets in the river in front of the Zoo.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager added that it would be outside the purview of Park Rangers.

Councilor Rickenmann said that he wanted to verify that we are not duplicating services.

Councilor Davis asked if we are considering purchasing additional vehicles for Community Safety Officers.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said yes, but we are dealing with that on a separate basis.

Councilor Davis said that he would feel more comfortable if we dealt with that.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that we have some vehicles for the CSOs, but surely not enough to do what we are doing. They require smaller vehicles.

Councilor Davis said that these folks are the immediate eyes and ears and I want to make sure they are mobile.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that they already have a specific type of car in mind that would be more conducive for the CSOs.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department explained that VisionAir is the vendor for the records management system, but it has not been a very friendly system.

Councilor Rickenmann asked if we are in a long-term contact with VisionAir.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that everything that VisiorAir committed to do for us has been a disaster. When we went into that arrangement the City made a significant investment based on a commitment from VisionAir that they would be able to bring that to pass. As I explained to Chief Carter, they simply have not been able to deliver. We have been in litigation and all kinds of discussions and he is right we are probably are best suited right now to focus our attention in another direction.

Councilor Cromartie said that they were told that we would have the capability to write information into the computers; that information would automatically go to the headquarters; and we would be able to get instant reports.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that the Police Officers can do that, but there are a lot of bumps in the road to get there.

Councilor Cromartie asked if they have started to look for a new system.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager said that they have begun some dialog in that regard.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that they are trying to have information at an officer's disposal so he/she can make an informed decision. There were problems with the air cards that are used in place of modems.

Councilor Cromartie asked if an officer can access reports on file for a specific address.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department explained that most records management systems can be searched by the address, case number and other information, but our system is not integrated where that information is available.

Councilor Davis asked if we can access other systems.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police Department said that we have some other issues; it's a lot more complicated than I can explain. It's a long process to obtain the information needed to make decisions.

Councilor Davis suggested that we look at the system used by Chicago. I am hoping that we can cut down on the amount of time needed to get the feedback to citizens. I hear a lot about how long it takes to get something in hand showing that we are working on a case, especially when insurance companies are involved.

Councilor Devine asked if there is an information technology person within the Police Department.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police said that he has Police Officers that perform information technology roles.

Councilor Cromartie asked if there is a person from the Information Technology Department that works specifically for the Police Department.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police said yes, but she serves other departments. She does a pretty good job working with a very antiquated system.

Councilor Devine said that you need your own person to understand what the Police Department's needs are. The key is having access to information.

Mr. Charles P. Austin, Sr., City Manager responded that we have just completed an assessment of the IT needs for Municipal Court and we will be addressing that. With regards to the person that Chief has inside the Police Department who has some background in IT; I've asked our Director of Information Technology to set up a certification program that allows them to perform basic functions. There are some things they can respond to and troubleshoot; technical and more comprehensive matters can be handled at a different level. For consistency sake and to protect the integrity of our system, I would like to have each person performing any kind of IT function to be minimally certified so that we will have a record of who the individuals are, what their backgrounds are and that would help us in terms of cost savings.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police reported that they still have to do some coordination and cultivation with other City departments and law enforcement agencies to share facilities in hope of reduced cost in the long run. We should be investing a lot more on training than we did in the past. He presented the projected cost for implementing the recommendations for fiscal year 2009/2010 and for three (3) to five (5) years.

Mayor Coble announced that Phase 2 of the report will be given on January 7, 2009 and that Phase 3 will be presented on January 21, 2009.

Mr. Tandy Carter, Chief of the Columbia Police said that the challenge here is for us to fill vacancies and retain what we have. We are working diligently to try and do that. I feel very optimistic that we will fill twenty-one (21) vacancies before the end of the fiscal year.

The report was received by Council. No action was taken.

B2. Redevelopment Plan – Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development

Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development distributed a map outlining the boundaries of what will be considered as the Renaissance Stimulus Package. We would like for you to approve those boundary areas today.

Councilor Devine explained that several months ago Mr. Davis, Mr. Cromartie and myself brought forward the idea of doing a Municipal Improvement District for areas of Columbia that have not been developing at the rate of other areas. Primarily, it's the property along North Main Street coming through Beltline and Sunset Boulevard, going to Farrow Road and Two Notch Road. At that time we approved a motion and asked that staff be directed to look at the proposed area and determine if this would be feasible. Staff has determined that it is feasible to move forward; however, the numbers cannot be finalized until staff knows the definite area we are proposing. Staff has looked at current projects that are on the board and areas that are right for development. Quite honestly coming right behind the presentation that the Police Chief did, we realize that a lot of this area has a high crime volume. We are asking that this Council approve the boundaries as proposed so that staff can bring forward projects and numbers. There are projects that have already been discussed, but we can't discuss them in public due to contract negotiations. This can be done as a Municipal Improvement District, but it would require that the funds within the boundary be assessed an additional tax; we are looking at creating assistance for people to put businesses here. It will boil down to being a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District as proposed. It's called a Renaissance Stimulus Package, because the Mayor talks a lot about this City being in a renaissance; this is clearly a renaissance and as we talk about the need to create jobs, this can be two-fold by allowing redevelopment in areas that are traditionally underserved and neglected and the ability to produce jobs in our community. It is a TIF, but it is being presented as a stimulus package.

Councilor Rickenmann said that the boundary stops on Tree Street, but it should go to Manning Avenue and that from Woodrow Street down to Santee Avenue was left out.

Councilor Finlay asked if the new Holder project on Assembly Street was being included in this TIF District.

Councilor Cromartie said it's included.

Councilor Finlay said that our operating budget will have some big issues with 300 houses or apartments coming online.

Councilor Rickenmann suggested that staff come back with the numbers for Council to review. You may have to change it depending on the criteria that were brought forward.

Councilor Davis said that we don't know that, but we do know that another part of the engine for this is us going out there and complimenting this with other incentives.

Councilor Rickenmann stated that it may not work, but you have to have the boundaries to run the numbers.

Councilor Gergel said that the boundaries needed to go further than Woodrow Street.

Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development explained that they determined the boundaries by including the North Columbia Master Plan, the East Central City Consortium Master Plan, the ERA Retail Study; and the high concentration areas of unemployment. The whole purpose of it is to be a job creating mechanism; to look at where the hotspots are for commercial development; and using incentives to entice developers to those areas.

Councilor Finlay asked what percentage of the City is incorporated within those boundaries.

Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development said that he was unsure, but it does encompass parts of Richland One, Two and a portion of District Three.

Councilor Finlay asked Mr. Lawton if we were talking about 15-20% of the City.

Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development said I don't know.

Councilor Finlay asked for the number.

Councilor Devine said that we can discuss this further after we get the numbers, identify projects and move forward with a Resolution. I understand the concerns of the budget, but a TIF would only capture the increment and the City services issues regarding code enforcement are being extended a great deal into this area and until there is a conscientious effort to move forward with some kind of City sponsored revitalization in these areas, we will continue to see those costs increase. As you add commercial areas the City services won't increase dramatically; law enforcement still passes this area; and commercial customers pay a little more for solid waste services. Until we decide that this is an area we want to concentrate on Mr. Lawton and his staff will not be able to present us with the numbers on what we are currently spending to service these areas.

Mr. Tony Lawton, Director of Community Development said what better way to help fight crime than by revitalizing these areas. That's just another tool or instrument to eliminate some of those problems and issues.

Councilor Rickenmann understands that Mr. Lawton needs the boundaries so that he can come back with some numbers and that these boundaries are subject to change.

Councilor Gergel said that she is ready to vote for this, but she would like to take the map and drive through the area realizing that as we move down this path there might be something more appropriate.

Councilor Finlay said that he is willing to look at numbers; it is going to be tough with a TIF this large. We will have to spend time looking at this. He directed the City Manager to provide calculations on the millage rate in Columbia versus Charleston and Greenville; both City and county so that we can understand current tax rates, because the TIF is going to impose an additional tax on commercial properties. If we are going to provide an incentive we need to understand where we stack up in comparison to other cities. We should also include Lexington County.

Councilor Devine suggested that Rock Hill be included in the comparison. She explained that this would not be an additional tax on commercial; you are catching the increment on the increase in the property tax.

Councilor Finlay said that we are going to end up raising millage rates to compensate.

Councilor Devine said that we are talking about the increment and there hasn't been an increment in any of those areas in ten (10) years. If you look at Farrow Road, a lot of the property is tax-exempt. I understand that some areas have a certain amount of natural increase in the business, but the corridor that we are targeting has not had any and will not have any without an effort from the City.

Councilor Davis said that the arguments clearly make sense, but these are the expectations of the people who are in these designated areas; we have on the table several economic development plans and we need to be partnering with the folks that we are going to attract to the area. The time is now and we need to show these people that we are putting our money where our mouth is.

Councilor Cromartie said that tax increment financing does not result in an increase in taxes, but it results in increased property values and that is why the Vista is generating more taxes than it ever has before.

Upon motion by Mr. Cromartie, seconded by Mr. Davis, Council voted unanimously to approve the boundaries of the Renaissance Stimulus Package as revised and with the understanding that staff will use these boundaries to prepare financial data for future consideration by Council.

- B3. Employee Wellness Campaign – Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager of Bureau of Neighborhood and Community Services and Ms. Ray Borders Gray, Wellness Campaign Coordinator

Councilor Devine said that Ms. Gray will provide a general report, but a more detailed report was included in your packages. We are asking today that you listen to her report and endorse the Resolution so that we can start in January. I have been discussing this for a year and I want to commend staff for their work. We want to pay specific attention to having a City endorsed vending policy.

Ms. Ray Borders Gray, Wellness Campaign Coordinator recognized the All-Health Program Team members that were present. Currently, our City employees are working on a 4-week step challenge wherein dozens of employees across the City are counting their steps everyday. The intent is for them to get at least 10,000 steps. We will have other wellness challenges next year along with a smoking cessation class and an incentive to reimburse employees for gym memberships. Another idea is to recognize employees for using the memberships that they already have or encouraging them to get new memberships. To be eligible for the reimbursement employees must complete a health assessment; provide proof of payment for the gym membership; and provide proof of attendance for three (3) days a week. The reimbursement is capped at what it would cost an individual to join the Drew Wellness Center; it's not the entire membership, but it is a large portion of it.

Councilor Devine said that we discussed this and I really support it, but I want to make sure that everybody understands that we want to encourage people to go to the Wellness Center, but it's not necessarily convenient for everyone and we don't want to deter our staff from being involved in a gym. While we will encourage people to be a part of the Wellness Center, it still allows them to utilize that money for any other gym. They must attend at least twelve (12) times per month so there has to be a commitment on the staff person.

Councilor Cromartie said that he is very supportive of the program. He suggested that they provide additional incentives for people to use the Wellness Center, because it would help to offset the City's budget. We have talked about making the Wellness Center available 24-hours a day by allowing patrons to enter after scanning their hands to verify membership.

Councilor Rickenmann said that it will cost us, but in the long run we will have a lot healthier workforce.

Councilor Devine agreed that it is practically free, because the membership currently costs \$180 and we are reimbursing up to \$160.

Councilor Cromartie said that he doesn't want to get into a position whereby you have all that use and then we don't have the budget like it should be for the Wellness Center; that's very important. We want to make sure we keep it financially responsible; otherwise, when the cost get out of line you will say that it's not paying for itself. I am very conscience about that.

Mr. S. Allison Baker, Assistant City Manager for the Bureau of Neighborhood and Community Services said that he appreciates Mr. Cromartie's comments and the fact that he is adamant about that. I too have been adamant about the fact that employees should not come to the Wellness Center for free, because we are charged with raising a certain amount of revenue. It is possible Mr. Rickenmann, for us to come closer to it standing on its own bottom, but when we opened the facility we made a conscience decision to keep the cost down. Our Wellness Center provides the best experience of any government owned facility and is as good as any private owned facility in the Midlands. That is the incentive for employees to join. The price that we charge is also less than any you can get at any place. Based on the recommendations, we built in an incentive for employees to join the Wellness Center.

Councilor Finlay requested the exact amount of revenue being generated from membership fees at the Wellness Center.

Ms. Ray Borders Gray, Wellness Campaign Coordinator reported that the final recommendation is the canteen and vending policy to help create an environment that encourages and supports healthy living by providing a minimal standard for healthy options for all canteens and vending machines at City of Columbia facilities.

Councilor Rickenmann added a caveat to install water machines at City facilities as a healthy option.

Ms. Ray Borders Gray, Wellness Campaign Coordinator agreed to look at that as well.

Upon motion by Ms. Devine, seconded by Mr. Cromartie, Council voted unanimously to approve Resolution No.: R-2008-054 – Supporting the Better Me Employee Wellness Program. *Please refer to Item 27.*

Councilor Rickenmann asked Ms. Gray to consider distributing weekly healthy recipes.

Councilor Cromartie recalled that he use to receive a quarterly medical tip brochure and asked to receive it again. He asked that this information be available online.

- B4. Economic Development Activities – Mr. Jim Gambrell, Executive Director of Economic Development – *This staff report was deferred.*

APPEARANCE OF PUBLIC HAVING BUSINESS WITH CITY COUNCIL

No one appeared at this time.

- **Council recessed at 1:43 p.m.**
- **Council reconvened on the second floor at 2:05 p.m.**

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon motion by Mr. Finlay, seconded by Mr. Rickenmann, Council voted unanimously to go into Executive Session at 2:05 p.m. for the discussion of **Items C.** through **F.** as amended.

- C. Receipt of legal advice which relates to matters covered by attorney-client privilege
- Ordinance No.: 2008-104 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 14, Offenses and Provisions to add Article X, Sexual Offender Residency Restrictions
 - Ordinance No.: 2008-108 - Amending the 1998 Code of Ordinances of the City of Columbia, South Carolina, Chapter 8, Environmental Health and Sanitation, Article IV, Pollution Control, Division 5, Regulations and Requirements Relating to Smoking of Tobacco Products, Sec. 8-218 to add (8); and to delete Sec. 8-219 and renumber subsequent section

This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.

- D. Discussion of negotiations incident to the proposed sale of property
- Bus Barn Property
 - Lady / Lincoln Street

These items were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.

- E. **Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements
- Economic Development
 - School District
 - Celco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless
 - **Solicitors Office

These items were discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.

- F. **Receipt of legal advice which relates to a pending, threatened or potential claim
- **Metro Wastewater Treatment Plant
 - **Damon's

This item was discussed in Executive Session. No action was taken.

- **Council adjourned the Executive Session at 3:44 p.m. to reconvene the meeting for a briefing on the City's healthcare plans.**

- G. Briefing on City's Healthcare Plans – Ms. Jo Stewart of Towers Perrin

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin emphasized that the Council has an opportunity to make changes and still be competitive; your cost today are in line with what we would expect your cost to be for the plan you provide and the group you cover; and we believe that your employees understand the need for change.

Councilor Devine asked how many employees participated in the focus groups.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that there were two (2) focus groups with eighteen (18) in the first group and fifteen (15) employees in the second group.

Councilor Cromartie inquired about the ethnicity of the participants.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Human Resources Director responded that it was a very diverse group.

Councilor Cromartie inquired about the ages of the group.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Human Resources Director said that the age was diverse and they tried to spread the representatives throughout the departments.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that the groups were non-management and management and those findings are included in your packages. She continued to emphasize that there is opportunity for change, but that change needs to be managed in terms of the level of change you want that will impact your employees and from an internal perspective to include communication. We know there are some issues with retirees, but we want to focus today on the changes for active employees. For purposes of this document and pricing, we have assumed that the pre-65 retirees will have the same plan. She introduced Tom Chung who is an actuary in our office and Jeff Center has done a lot of the project management and also conducted the focus groups and they will participate in the discussion as we go through it. If you will recall, the last time I was here we did a session where we talked about guiding principles; you gave me a lot of your thoughts; we captured those thoughts and what you wanted to see; we took the results of that conversation and tried to put them into some guiding principles around what would guide the decisions or the recommendations that we brought to you today. She referred to the Health Care Guiding Principles as outlined on page 3: cost management, cost transparency, cost sharing, employee input, flexibility and choice, health improvement and how it connects to wellness incentives and programs that you are doing, benefit design, program administration and on-going program management. I won't go through these in detail, but I would encourage you to look through them and make sure that we've captured what you believe should be the guiding principles as we make changes to the design. This is what helps us determine the recommendations that we bring to you.

- **Mr. Finlay left the meeting at 3:50 p.m.**

Councilor Rickenmann asked if they incorporated the feedback from the employees.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that they did not incorporate that feedback with the guiding principles, but we did note that employee input was a critical guiding principle. She referred to page 5, which is the benchmarking analysis wherein they looked at the City's plan relative to other plans such as the State plan; four (4) other municipal employers and one (1) large private employer. The important number to look at is the relative value number that's in bold. We have compared your plan on a relative value basis to the other plans. The best way to think about this is if your plan paid out \$1 then the SC State Plan would pay out 87¢; Employer 1 would pay out 89¢; Employer 2 would pay out 94¢; Employer 3 would pay out 91¢. By looking at this we can say with a great deal of certainty that your plan is genuinely richer than this peer group of organizations and that's one way to tell that there is some opportunity to reduce the value of your plan and still be competitive.

Councilor Devine asked if the other employers were local.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that they are all local.

Councilor Cromartie asked if they were City and county employers.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said yes; a combination of the two. The bottom part shows the contributions they have and you'll see that there's only one other organization in this peer group that doesn't charge anything for employee only, but for the most part your costs are lower than the others.

Councilor Devine said that the firm that doesn't charge for employee only seems to charge more for the other groups. Is that because they are not charging for the person so they aggregate up or is it based on what they are providing for the plan.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that relative value wise their plan is lower than the City's plan. It's based on their contribution strategy; cost sharing strategy; and what percentage of the total cost they want to be picked up by the dependent and what part they are covering.

Councilor Cromartie said that we should encourage preventive maintenance and part of that is to be in a position to make sure that the primary care office visit is low. What does 80% mean? If I went to the insurance company what would the value be?

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin explained that the plan would pay 80% and you would pay 20% of the cost of that primary care bill. The primary care bills are around \$75 to \$80. I call your attention now to page 8, because on this page we benchmark your current costs against a very large database of 500+/- employers. We know that in this database that we maintain that the average cost per employee is \$8,875, but we looked at your demographics and your plan design relative to the average within that database. We made adjustments in your plan and from an age and gender perspective we expect your group to cost 5% less than the database; the family size would cost 20% less; the geography would cost 4% less.

Councilor Davis asked if these are historical numbers.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that the City's current cost is \$6,827. If we look at your plan value it is 6% richer than the average in this database, which again is consistent with the message about your plan being richer relative to its peer group and to this very large database. That says that overall we would expect your cost to be 22% less than the database average, so we did a custom benchmark of \$6,899 and your actual cost; the plan cost per employee is \$6,827. She referred to page 9, which outlines how much of the current cost the employee covers versus what the City covers. Most employers in this database are charging something. On the dependent side the average is 24% for the database and the City's is 30%; therefore, you are charging slightly more on the dependent side and less on the employee side.

Councilor Rickenmann asked is that new.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin explained that what that means in total is that you charge 11% in cost sharing, whereas our database averages 21%. In total your employees contribute about 11% of the cost of what it takes to pay all their claims, while the database average shows that most employers charge 21%. There should be a change in contributions and a change in plan.

Councilor Devine said that she would prefer to keep the employee benefit and make them pay more on the dependent. We need to hear from our employees.

Councilor Cromartie said that this is going to affect a lot of people and I would be more comfortable if there was a mechanism to hear from them.

Councilor Rickenmann said that the problem isn't our current employees, it's the retirees.

Councilor Davis said that he is interested in seeing the design for retirees, because their ability to participate financially is limited.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin reiterated that on today they need to get an agreement on the approach we want to take for active employees. She referred them to page 10, noting that the City's current budget rate is very close to what they would project the cost to be. On page 11 we have the recommendations and areas for consideration. We incorporated some of the feedback you gave us, some of the feedback from employees and the information in terms of the benchmarking. We are recommending several changes including offering plan choice to employees. We want to give them the opportunity to pick between the two (2) plans, which helps to improve employee perception and it meets the needs of a diverse group from a cost and benefits perspective. We have priced it so that the decision an employee makes will be cost neutral to the City. We believe that you can require additional cost sharing through the plan design, because it is currently richer than the peer group. We are suggesting some reduction in the plan design. We are recommending an increase in the lifetime maximum. Today you have a \$1 million maximum over a lifetime and we are recommending that it goes to \$2 million to be consistent with the benchmark. We recommend that you add employee contributions for single coverage, because we see that as a very common practice. We are recommending that the cost sharing be set at 10% for employee coverage and the dependent's cost sharing will remain at 30%. We are hearing that you don't want to wait until January 2010 to make the changes; you'd like to make the changes as of July 1, 2009, but we also believe that ultimately you want the plans to run on a calendar year basis. People would pick their plan in the fall; it's effective in January; and it stays in place for 12 months. We are recommending that the revised program be implemented effective July 1, 2009; the City would run a short plan year for six (6) months; then they select again in the fall and then run on a calendar year basis. You can do this administratively; it does require two (2) enrollment periods. We talked to your programming and payroll staff and we all believe that this can be accomplished and it gives you the benefit of making the changes sooner. We also recommended a change in terms of the tier ratio as outlined on page 12. We know that your employee cost is 1 and we expect your employee plus spouse ratio to be 2.4 times that amount. We want to take the rates that you are going to base your contributions on and align those rates so that they better reflect the cost for that tier. This is an important change, because it speaks to the transparency issue of reflecting the actual cost of coverage. Page 13 outlines the proposed plans as recommended. We designed two (2) plans which is option A; the plan that's competitive with your peer group or option B; the buy-up plan that has a value about mid-way between the current plan and the proposed core plan. There is a \$500 deductible for a single employee or \$1,500 for a family. Today the deductible is \$200 and \$400 so it does go up. The coinsurance maximum is the amount you pay out subject to coinsurance. Today the most an employee would have to pay out of pocket is \$1,200 and \$2,400 for a family and we are increasing that in Option A to \$2,500 and \$5,500. The lifetime maximum is being increased from \$1 million to \$2 million, which is a significant enhancement from a perception standpoint, but from a cost perspective it is a very manageable cost. For Option A, the in-patient will be 80%. We are keeping the office visit co-pay and it will be \$20 for primary care and \$30 for specialty care. We are increasing the emergency room from \$50 to \$150. She said that wellness is an enhancement, because today your wellness has a cap of \$100 and we want to pay in full for your wellness that's applicable to your age and gender. It is an important enhancement that encourages people to do the right thing. We are not recommending Health Reimbursement Accounts (HRA) or Health Savings Accounts (HSA). We changed the prescriptions and it will be perceived by many people as an enhancement. Today, your prescriptions are subject to the deductible; you meet your deductible; and then you pay 20% of the cost of the prescription for retail. We are recommending flat co-pays for prescription drugs not subject to the deductible. If you go to a primary care physician and you pay your \$20; the doctor gives you a prescription; you would pay \$5 for a generic prescription. If the doctor recommends a preferred brand that will be \$25 and if the prescription is not on the preferred list it would be \$40. Again, this encourages people to ask for the generic and if it's not available, it encourages them to ask for a preferred brand; the most they are going to pay is \$40. We are recommending that mail order prescriptions cost 2.5 times more than retail, because it is a 90-

day supply versus a 30-day supply. The relative value of plan A is a 15% reduction from your current plan. Plan B is another option for people; it is halfway between Plan A and your current plan; it's less than your current plan, but it's richer than Plan A. Your employees are willing to pay more for a plan that's close to what they have today and that's why we are offering a richer plan as a choice. She referred to page 16, which outlines the contributions that employees would pay for both plans. The top section shows what it will cost in total; the middle shows the employee contributions; and the bottom shows what it will cost the City of Columbia in comparison to what is paid today. We set our contributions based on Plan A as the plan that you would be subsidizing at 10% of the employee rate and 70% of the dependent rate. If people want Plan B they pay the difference; they buy up to that plan. She referred to page 14, which outlines the incurred cost and savings for the active and pre-65 retirees for a 6-month period. By adopting the recommended plan design and contribution approach the savings for the first 6-months are \$1.3 million and the next year you would save \$2.6 million and for the 18-month period you will save \$3.9 million. Page 15 outlines the incurred cost and savings for the 2010 calendar year. One of the guiding principles is to recognize the limited resources that the City has so we tried to develop a plan design that reflects a competitive position; a buy-up option that allows employees to get close to where they are today; it produces a contribution scenario that's competitive in the market; and it produces savings for the City.

- **Mr. Cromartie left the meeting at 4:30 p.m.**

Councilor Rickenmann said that we know we can't keep going the way we have been going, but in the same sense we don't want to reduce things so dramatically that it affects the employees. It is a real balancing act for us.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that pages 20-22 outline the employee feedback. We heard that job stability is the key reason why employees work for the City, but the benefits to include retirement and healthcare are the main reasons that the employees stay here. They said that affordable monthly contributions and affordable out-of-pocket costs are the most important features when choosing a medical plan.

Councilor Rickenmann is concerned that this doesn't include dental; employees want to customize their plans.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin reported that employees would like a better dental plan and a better vision plan. While not part of this assignment, we would recommend that you consider enhancing your dental plan and offer a more solid vision plan for people to choose.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director explained that it is important for Council to decide if they want to adopt the plans as proposed and if Plan A or Plan B is the core plan.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that there are variations between the two plans, but we wanted to outline an approach that we thought was competitive, offer choice and produce some savings. We are recommending that you finalize the plan design and contributions for active employees as early in the year as possible, because we are going to make this plan effective on July 1, 2009 and some lead time is needed to prepare for that change. We have to communicate with the employees about the change; we have to adjust your payroll system to accommodate employee contributions; there is internal work that needs to occur. This is an appropriate time to address open issues regarding retiree changes and to finalize those recommendations. Then we can develop an implementation plan and timeline. We recommend that the retiree recommendations be finalized by February 2009.

Councilor Devine asked when enrollment would occur.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that it would be during the April 2009 timeframe for July and again in October 2009 for January 2010.

Councilor Rickenmann asked if Ms. Stewart would provide the models for employees to calculate which plan works best.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that they would work with the City's third party administrator (TPA) to see if that tool is available and we will help you figure out how best to do this.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director said that we must have 100% enrollment participation; therefore employees need to be aware of what they are enrolling in and what options they will have to include the option to not enroll at all.

Councilor Rickenmann said that some people will choose not to participate. We have people now that don't participate.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director said that the current plan is not voluntary; it is mandatory.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that they have talked about a default plan for people who don't enroll; when you offer a choice you are offering for people to participate in one plan or not participate.

Councilor Davis said that we don't want misinformation to get out there, because people will start making these decisions based on people they trust.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director added that it is important to make the decision in January, because we have to make changes and so does our TPA, Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that we need to make sure that they have time to set up and test the new program to ensure that it's set up correctly.

Councilor Rickenmann asked if this will be done through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director said no; we have a contract with Blue Cross Blue Shield, which is our TPA. That contract doesn't expire until June 2009.

Councilor Rickenmann said that we should be shopping around.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources asked if we would be shopping for someone to administer the plan, because it's our plan. Basically, they do the paperwork for us.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that the question is do you keep the administrator that you have.

Councilor Rickenmann said that we've had cost increase that we haven't attacked, which has caused this to get where it is. Whose responsibility was that? We have spent a lot of money without knowing and I would assume that it's their responsibility to make us aware that of that.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director said that the cost has gone up based on a couple of different things, but she doesn't think that it's Blue Cross Blue Shields fault.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that the administrative fee is around 3%, which is probably the lowest in the country.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin explained that changing the plan design and the contributions doesn't require you to change the administrator. A part of managing change is determining how much change you want to implement at one time.

Councilor Rickenmann said that we want to know that if things change in the future that we are informed and we can attack it. We are trying to plan for the future.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that program management is a guiding principle; once this plan is in place you will have protocols in place to monitor that.

Councilor Rickenmann asked how much does it cost to have a TPA.

Mr. Jacques Gilliam, Director of Human Resources said that we pay \$20 per employee per month, which is a lot better than the average.

Ms. Jo Stewart, Towers Perrin said that the administrative services only (ASO) fee is in a very competitive range. It's not just the fee you pay; it's the network and the discounts.

Councilor Rickenmann said that he is not discounting that, but if we are making changes we need to look at everything.

Councilor Devine concurred.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director said that they are concerned about the amount of change that can be managed within the first six months. We can look at that during the following year.

Councilor Rickenmann said that it would be beneficial for Council to receive a memo outlining the recommendations and the rationale for such, but at some point we have to see what's out there.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director asked the members of Council if the timeframe will work; do you want us to come back on January 7, 2009?

Councilor Rickenmann said that we won't have time for a Work Session on this between now and then.

Councilor Devine suggested that the Council meet at 4:00 p.m. on January 7, 2009.

Ms. Melisa Caughman, Interim Finance Director stated that they won't have all of the retiree information by then. We need to consider the GASB 45 implications.

This was a briefing. No action was taken. There was a consensus of Council to continue discussions on the health care plans on January 7, 2008 at 1:00 p.m.

- **Council reconvened the Executive Session at 4:50 p.m. No action was taken.**
- **Council adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.**

Respectfully submitted by:

Erika D. Salley
City Clerk